Fauci's Right-Hand Man Dr. David Morens Pleads Guilty to Conspiracy

08/20/2026 // Morgan S. Verity // **1K** Views

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Dr. David Morens, the longtime senior adviser to Dr. Anthony Fauci at the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), pleaded guilty on Tuesday, Aug. 18, in Greenbelt federal court to conspiracy to commit offenses and defraud the United States.

The plea, entered under 18 U.S.C. § 371, caps a records scandal that began with emails in which Morens boasted about making federal documents disappear. According to the *Department of Justice* (DOJ), Morens faces up to five years in federal prison, three years of supervised release, and a fine of up to $250,000.

U.S. District Judge Paula Xinis is overseeing the case, with sentencing scheduled for Nov. 12. His attorney, Tim Belevetz, said in a statement: "By pleading guilty today, Dr. Morens has taken responsibility for what he did and will continue to do so." The plea agreement dropped four other charges from a five-count April indictment, including destruction of records and aiding and abetting, which each carried up to 20 years.

Conspiracy Details and Email Trail

The conspiracy, according to the plea agreement and stipulation of facts, ran from roughly April 2020 through at least June 2023. It began after the National Institutes of Health (NIH) terminated a grant titled "Understanding the Risk of Bat Coronavirus Emergence" that had been awarded to EcoHealth Alliance, a New York-based nonprofit that subawarded U.S. taxpayer funding to the Wuhan Institute of Virology. The NIH terminated the grant, in the Justice Department's words, "based on allegations that [the Wuhan coronavirus] COVID-19 emerged from the *Wuhan Institute of Virology*."

Prosecutors said Morens and his co-conspirators "agreed in writing to intentionally hide their communications from public view" by routing government business through Morens's personal Gmail account, in explicit anticipation of Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests. Emails obtained by the House Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Pandemic revealed Morens telling correspondents, "As you know, I try to always communicate on Gmail because my NIH email is FOIA'd constantly."

In another message, according to court filings, he wrote that he would "delete anything I don't want to see in the *New York Times*." In February 2021, he detailed the mechanics: "I learned from our FOIA lady here how to make emails disappear after i am FOIA'd but before the search starts, so I think we are all safe. Plus I deleted most of those earlier emails after sending them to Gmail." [1] [2]

Illegal Gratuities and Official Acts

Morens also admitted to discussing illegal gratuities with "Co-Conspirator 1," widely understood to be associated with EcoHealth Alliance leadership. In June 2020, that co-conspirator shipped two bottles of wine to Morens' Maryland home as thanks for his "behind-

the-scenes shenanigans." According to the DOJ, Morens then identified an official act he could perform to "deserve" the gift: authoring a scientific commentary in a prominent medical journal advocating that COVID-19 had natural origins.

The co-conspirator floated further compensation, including meals at Michelin-starred restaurants in Paris, New York and Washington, D.C. The plea documents describe a pattern in which Morens used his position to channel non-public NIH information, strategy on restoring the canceled funding, and edits to draft letters addressed to NIH leadership on EcoHealth's behalf. *CBS News* reported that the filings refer to a "Senior NIAID Official 1" who appears to be Fauci himself.

Congressional and Legal Aftermath

The case stems from a House Select Subcommittee investigation that uncovered the email trail. Sen. Rand Paul (R-KY) urged the DOJ in May 2024 to investigate Morens and the NIH FOIA office he claimed had coached him. [3] When the grand jury indicted Morens in April, then-Acting Attorney General Todd Blanche called the conduct "a profound abuse of trust," stating that Morens and his co-conspirators "deliberately concealed information and falsified records in an effort to suppress alternative theories regarding the origins of COVID-19."

Fauci distanced himself in congressional testimony, claiming ignorance of Morens' practices and denying use of personal email for government business. A Senate committee voted this month to hold Fauci in contempt of Congress for declining to answer questions.

Fauci holds a pardon from former President Joe Biden covering conduct from Jan. 1, 2014, through Jan. 19, 2025. The plea lands amid a widening accountability fight over COVID-19 origins and the ensuing cover-up, with calls mounting for further investigations into Fauci's role. [4] [5]

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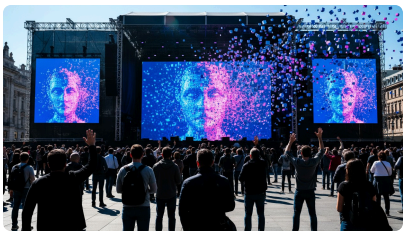

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